Stock of Foodgrains

2066. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a substantial stock of foodgrains is presently held by Government;

(b) if so, details of stock of wheat, rice and other foodgrains as on 28th February, 1995 alongwith its value at which procured vis-a-vis its value at the current wholesale rates, and estimated annual cost to the exchequer for holding the stock;

(c) whether it is fact that the stock, as above, is considered to be a comfortable buffer and will culminate into a let-up in the procurements from the forthcoming rabi seasons; and

(d) if not, rationale behind accumulating foodgrains stock beyond the presnt level?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The stock position of foodgrains with public agencies in Central Pool as on 28.2.1995 is estimated at 28.67 million tonnes consisting of 10.17 million tonnes wheat and 18.50 million tonnes rice. The value of above stocks at acquisition cost is Rs. 15484.29 crores. The estimated carrying cost per annum as 28.67 million tonnes is Rs. 2970.47 crores at Rs. 103.62 per quintal during 1994-95.

(c) and (d) The stock of foodgrains in Central Pool at present continue to be comfortable and are far in excess of minimum buffer norms prescribed. No let-up is expected in the procurement during the forthcoming Rabi season. The stocks of foodgrains in the Central Pool, are built by procurement of wheat and paddy from the farmers and levy rice from the millers/traders. The procurement of wheat and paddy from the farmers is under price suppot operation. It is obligatory for the Government to procure foodgrains of fair average quality (FAQ) offered by farmers, but it is voluntary for the farmers to sell the foodgrains to the Government. Hence, the stock, the buffer stock in the Central Pool automatically increases/decreases depending upon the quantity of foodgrains procured under the price support operation from year to year.

Procurement of Paddy

2067. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the farmers have been protesting that Government are procuring their "better" produce of paddy at cheaper rates;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government treat the PR-106 variety as superfine; and therefore, purchases it at the official rate of Rs. 380 per quintal; yet Government procurement agencies were forcing the farmers to part with the produce at Rs. 20 per quintal cheaper than the fixed rate; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken to protect the farmers interest?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) There had been complaints in the initial phase of procurement during the current Kharif Marketing Season in Punjab and Haryana regarding downgradation of paddy. On enquiry, the stock of paddy claimed to be of superior quality was found below the prescribed specifications with admixture of lower quality, higher incidence of damaged grains, etc.

(b) and (c) The problem of PR-106 superfine variety being accepted as fine by the procuring agencies arose in certain parts of Punjab and Haryana. However, it was due to the high admixture of lower grades of paddy as well as the presenece of damaged grains beyond the prescribed limits, that the downgradation of superfine variety of PR-106 as fine was made.